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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Fine and Applied Arts
in Candidacy for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

PSYCHIC EXPRESSION THROUGH IMAGE-MAKING

By
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May 18, 1985

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Since I can recall, I have been in awe of the classic beauty and function of vessels and the power of both nature and the psyche.

In 1985, I paint vessels almost exclusively. These vessels represent to me the constant holding power of nature. I acknowledge the powerful transformative effect these "vessel as symbol" images present to me.

The vessel I paint most frequently, a white porcelain pitcher, symbolizes and in fact houses a powerful personae that I accept as an expression of my psyche and the vestige of a psychic excursion I took after a tragic event in my life in 1983.

My interest in containers/vessels/receptacles became most pronounced after an event that I could not integrate into the fibre of my being: the death of my husband.

Leaning towards symbolist tendencies throughout my life and thus being stimulated by objects in whatever environs I found myself to be, I have essentially amassed a select group of objects that are the basis of a personal mythology. After my husband's death, my emphasis shifted from identifying with my own set of objects to total identification with his possessions. His objects assumed a presence that was noticeably independent of my attributing significance to them. Portable shrines, constructed virtually anywhere his personal effects were lain, became a common occurrence. These "sites" were charged with an energy I will refer to as "psychic": that is, an electromagnetic energy often detectable yet not completely discernable through either scientific means or with normal perception. At times, like so many restless children, they demanded my constant and complete attention. I resigned myself to sharing my living space with these "events."

Concurrently, I was in a state of unresolve because I could not find the "correct" vessel in which to place my husband's ashes. I was insulted by the tin I had received them in and could only accept its presence in my home on a temporary basis. This heavily symbolic malaise sought resolution deep within my subconscious mind where all traumas submerge themselves while disguising the process of identification until the conscious mind is willing to participate, however reluctantly. I have found that artists, familiar with the process of visual image-making, succumb more naturally to the work of the subconscious mind; more naturally than most. I believe the subconscious mind can be facilitated in its expression and the resolution of its contents by its emergence into art-making activity.

My conscious mind seemed satisfied, at that time, to put this search for the true container into spiritual terms. I was seeking an appropriate vessel in which my dead could be carried to his afterlife. This container would serve as a replacement for the vehicle his soul had shed. The task of finding this vessel had the dual purpose of serving as a tribute to his existence and as a burial ritual for the dead. At the time, I did not realize that my subconscious mind could not accept the terms and conditions of the death of someone I had loved. The death provoked a sometimes desperate and oftentimes relentless search to replace the loss.

With the beauty of inner logic, my subconscious mind set out to find a set of symbols I could identify which might possess power in and of itself and then, by association, this set of symbols could be transforming. With the task of

transforming images of death and dying into symbols of rebirth and regeneration, my subconscious asserted a will of its own for the sake of sustaining psychic well-being as a whole.

Once the recognition of these efforts reached my conscious mind, I was relieved of much grief and calmed by the profound nature of the individual psyche in its intricate functioning as an analytical tool. I was reminded once again of the powerful impulse towards expression that is unharnessed by the psyche as it seeks dimension in its own physical manifestation in either forms and situations that are pre-existing which can be approximated for its purposes or those which it constructs for its exact purposes.

There are numerous references in modern psychology to the power of the psyche to act independently of the conscious will particularly although not exclusively in the work of Carl Jung.¹ The question remains: Where does the impulse for this self-legislated aspect of the psyche originate?

Once a psyche chooses forms through which it expresses itself, the potential for image-making and symbol-forming can in fact transform earlier concepts held by the conscious mind.

I would like to focus on the potential this personally revealing phenomenon holds for image-making activity primarily in the arts yet in a larger sense for the purpose of serving as a vehicle for spiritual expansion.

¹ It has been noted in Sallie Nichols, Jung and Tarot: An Archetypal Journey (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1980), p. 14: "The discovery of the archetypal layer of the unconscious and the presentation of techniques for confronting it is one of Jung's great contributions to psychology."

As a painter, prior to the event of my husband's death, I had noticed that the selection and arrangement of objects in still-life painting was a form of psychic expression. I discovered the symbolic significance of this act of choosing objects had latent impact often only after continual observation and study of the objects and their relationships.

With the conscious purpose of finding a subject matter for painting that had both expressive and academic potential, I chose still-life painting. I have always considered objects appealing because similar to flowers they emanate a sense of being yet are constant.

Traditional still-life objects, vases and pitchers, for instance, not only were comforting to my conscious mind based on their heritage in master works; they evoked further appeal in their ability to act as receptacles simply in consideration of their form. It was then a natural extension for the dynamic force of the psyche to direct my awareness towards the potential for using these receptacles as vessels for holding emotion, in this case, grief; or vessels for holding our energies be they creative or otherwise. The psyche, assuming that I would understand and then take advantage of the associative properties, took the liberty for me of stretching the notion of a pitcher which functions to hold liquid to be a symbol of release into which I could literally "pour my emotion." Further, in its visual allusion to female as receptacle and maternal vessel this object could be supportive in its function. This simple pitcher became a symbol of transformation over the course of time I drew and painted it and finally began to represent the interchange we have with the physical world of "inanimate objects."

In reference to the urn as "psychic vessel", I will refer to a discussion on the meaning of the name of the planet Saturn in which Alan Leo points out that:

Saturn is, figuratively speaking, the urn that holds the Sat. This Sanskrit word Sat signifies that one ever-present reality in the infinite world: the divine essence which is, but cannot be said to exist.²

Any and all forms are candidates for a psyche seeking expression. The process of selecting forms goes on unsolicited by our conscious awareness developing out of the necessity of the psyche, as an active and constant energy seeking dimension and expression. As an artist, I have often attempted to observe this process which represents vast art-making potential.

THE LIFE OF OBJECTS

There is a rich literary tradition on the life of objects from Kandinsky's poetic wandering on the subject to the Kahuna teachings. "We make vessels of clay," observed Lao-tzu "but their true nature is the emptiness within."³ According to Kahuna teachings, a discussion on the life of objects must include the topic of Mana.

² Alan Leo, How To Judge A Nativity (London: L.N. Fowler and Co., 1969; reprint ed., London: Camelot Press, 1971), p. 33.

³ Nichols, Jung and Tarot: An Archetypal Journey, p. 27.

Mana is a Melanesian word for extraordinarily effective power emanating from a human being, object, action or event, or from supernatural beings and spirits. Also health, prestige, power to work magic and to heal: a primitive concept of psychic energy.⁴

It is my belief, after many hours of studying objects that there is a dimension of experience and history which animates even common objects. Serge King writes in Kahuna Healing:

Aka is the basic "stuff" of the physical universe out of which every material manifestation is formed. The word has meanings of "luminous, transparent, shadow, reflection, mirror, essence. Aka acts like a mirror to reflect patterns of thought on both the psychic and physical levels. Compared to the realm of pure thought, it is a mere shadow. The kahunas believe that the "stuff" can be formed and shaped by conscious and unconscious thought, and that it acts as a container for mana. The more mana it contains, the more dense it appears. Some forms of aka are known to psychics as etheric or astral matter, and under certain conditions in the state of psychic awareness it appears as luminously transparent.⁵

Again, I will refer to Kahuna tradition in the discussion of the living essence of objects. For the purpose of this author, I will replace the term God with "unknowable essence."

Since God is in everything (or everything is in God-kahunas agree with both) everything has its own form of awareness. In a profound sense everything is alive, aware and responsive. And everything, even that which Western scientists might consider "dead" matter has a Higher Self with which one can consciously communicate. Unconscious communication or subconscious telepathy, is constantly taking place between us and our environment because it is the primary way in which the world interacts with itself. An example of this would be the way that plants have been shown to respond to pain or pleasure or other living things nearby. As humans, however, we have the potential for conscious, deliberate telepathic communication with anything, and thus the potential for purposefully influencing our environment through non-physical means.... In the old days a kahuna would ask permission from the spirit of a tree before he cut it or from the spirit of a valley before he crossed it. He did this out of respect for the same source that lived in all of them and in order to insure cooperation. Today a kahuna might talk to his car or his house in the same way and use the same concept in his healing work.⁶

Using these basic assumptions, let's now study the properties of objects to discover the grounds for asserting: objects not only retain energy as history and

⁴ C.G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, ed. Aniela Jaffe, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 396.

⁵ Serge King, Kahuna Healing: Holistic Health and Healing Practices of Polynesia (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1983), p. 64.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

from experience but they have original energy that is self-generating; storing information that is transmittable to individuals. This process of receiving information from objects is commonly referred to as psychometry.

Physical Properties

Two separate aspects under this category would include: (1) form as it follows function, (2) how physical features determine a psychology of form. Based on the structure of an object, we can draw certain parallels to human form allowing us to use objects as personifications of human energies and qualities. From this, certain conclusions about the masculine or feminine identity of a form can result.

Insofar as form follows function; let us compare the first eating utensil, a leaf functioning as a spoon, with its contemporary. The improved version of today's spoon facilitates the process of feeding oneself while carrying the reference to the original leaf. The stem has been lengthened with the modern utensil now crafted out of metal, the contour of the curved portion is better suited to our proportions and yet we have retained the integrity of the original implement in design features. Why have the original elements of the design been retained over the centuries? Beyond the fact that this form serves its function well, could it be that the origin of this form now represents something to our consciousness that cannot be displaced or adequately replaced? Is it possible that we equate the act of nourishing ourselves with the harmonious yin/yang properties upon which the spoon is based, the cup-like section (yin) on a stem (yang)? In fact, many of our original tools have survived with minor change and throughout these follow in form the principle of yin and yang existing as complements in a universal whole.

In a discussion of vessels existing throughout the historical periods of Egypt, W.M. Flinders Petrie cites one form for each epoch that was prevalent (see attached copy). He describes certain design features:

In the prehistoric age, many of the forms have no marked brim. The bowls, conical cups and jars simply end at a plain edge, like this marked Pre. (Fig.1) Brims were more usual in the later prehistoric age. A great variety of fancy forms appeared—double vases, square bottles, fish, birds or women were modelled; and as the whole pottery was handmade, such were no more difficult than circular forms.⁷

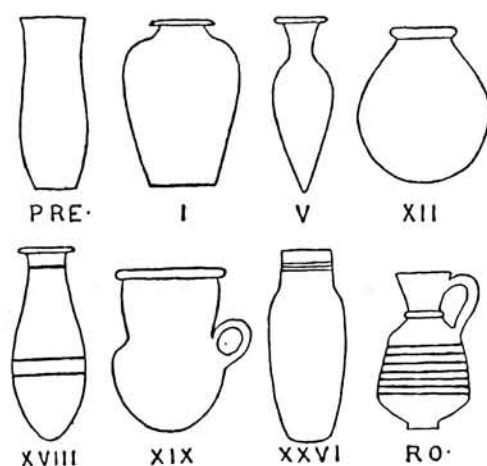
Although more specific forms were developing in Egypt, a vocabulary of original forms in receptacle vessels emerges from this diagram of epoch evolution. Many of today's vessel designs date back to these earlier designs diagrammed by Petrie. Historical reference as functional vessel (jug) and non-functional or decorative yet functional vessel (vase) to woman/mother as container of the universe and ideation of the yin principle is widely illustrated throughout mythology and religion.

How the physical properties (most often necessitated to a degree by the function of the object, or the utensil/tool), interact with personal psychic process and collective unconscious is a key to uncovering the symbolic potential of any viewing experience. We must also consider the role the object plays in our lives.

⁷ W.M. Flinders Petrie, Arts and Crafts of Ancient Egypt (New York: Attie Books, 1910), pp.126-127.

THE POTTERY

more clumsy, such as that marked I ; and some of the earlier forms were continued in a very degraded state. The main feature is the class of very large jars, two to three feet high, which were used for storing food and drink. This class rapidly deteriorated



and became almost extinct by the IIIrd dynasty. In the pyramid age some neatly-made pottery is found ; thin sharp-brimmed bowls were usual, and the form marked V, with a sharply pointed base, was peculiar to this time. By the XIIth dynasty the globular or drop-shaped pot was the prevalent type, and varies in size from a couple of inches to a couple

Fig. 1 Vessels in Epoch Evolution

Utensils, in particular, are possessed of a mystic force which helps to strengthen the intensity and rhythm of human volition. Thus, Schneider maintains that such instruments fulfill a triple role: they are cultural instruments, instruments of labor and finally reflections of the harmonious soul of the universe. The drinking-vessel, for instance, is a sacrificial vessel and also a drum. The blow-pipe is both a flute and a magic-whistle, etc.. Such ideas as these, concerned with the primitive notion of an object, have lately been resuscitated by artistic movements such as Dadaism and surrealism. By depicting objects in common use as if they were works of art, Marcel Duchamp removed them from the context of their merely utilitarian function (their only function according to Western thinking) and showed them in the light of their true essence, since that essence is revealed only in their uselessness (freed from necessity to serve some useful purpose). He showed that it was possible to see in a bottle-stand, for instance, the very mystic structure that governed the Gothic spires rising in the form of a cage, or the lamps in Islamic mosques with their multiple descending hoops; and that all the foregoing are related to the hollow pyramid of the Primitives (a symbol of the "conjunction" of earth—or the mother—with fire—or the spirit), and also to the artificial mountain and the geometric temple. The form of the object, then, fulfills an essential role in determining the symbolism; thus, all those symbols which take the form of a twin bell, with the upper bell placed upside down on the lower—for example, the twin drum or the hour-glass—are closely related to the corresponding graphic symbol: the letter X, or the cross of St. Andrew (symbolic of the intercommunication between the Upper and Lower worlds). Objects that are simple in form and function usually correspond either to the active or the passive groups; in other words, they represent either the contents or the receptacle. For instance: the lance (which is made to pierce) and the cup or chalice (whose sole function is to contain). The parallel between this classification and the division of the sexes is self-evident; but to limit the symbolic reference of a given object to this sexual implication is to mutilate seriously its true symbolism. The "conjunction" of the feminine and masculine principles within a complex object, especially if this object is—as in the case of a machine—endowed with movement, enables us to carry the sexual parallel a stage further and to characterize it as a kind of secularized lingham. The "objects of symbolic function" of the surrealists were nothing but the practical illustration of this allusive reality, strengthened by the fetishistic character of objects illustrated in their compositions.⁸

A direct result of the role an object plays in our lives is the reaction it evokes. This reaction is a composite function of the psychology of the individual and I propose the psychology of the object itself in keeping with the premise that forms have integrity based on their own necessity.

⁸ J.E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (Great Britain: Alden and Mowbrag, 1973), p. 239.

Based on an individual's psychology, one reacts to visual cues concerning the physical properties of an object as their specificity describes them. An open-mouthed jar might be characterized as a sympathetic form; or a comb, an instrument for grooming that is related to adornment, can evoke images of musicality or, reversedly, violence when viewed as a weapon.

When we view an object, we scan all the information we have ever amassed regarding that particular form, including every reference it has to other forms, ideas and experiences. If its function is familiar to us and readily discernable, we are not only interacting psychologically with its form but with its function. In fact, any past experience we may have had with this object or an object, situation or event in association to it is called up for review. Instead of consciously surveying this store of informational experience, our subconscious mind suppresses associations that are not germane to the issues and events we are presently addressing in our lives and selectively filters the remaining impression through the conscious mind. Perception, then, might be considered to be the selective seeing of an external reality. The independent will of the subconscious mind is emphasized here in its tendency towards crafting vision to meet its specifications. It solicits information, then response, serving as a testing ground for unconscious and conscious reaction while combining the extremes of conscious and unconscious with a logic of its own order that approaches wisdom: profound by nature of the fact that the process of elucidation is subterranean. The subconscious mind functions to keep the collective parts of the individual's psyche integrated. As dreams have been called "the guardians of sleep"⁹, the subconscious may well be the guardian of the soul, protecting the individual psyche from the pure force of the unconscious mind and the repressed force of the conscious mind while establishing a meeting ground where both ideas can be tested.

Symbolic Properties

When an object elicits heavy associative response from the viewer in its ability to represent something other than itself, it becomes a symbol.

Consider a box:

Like all receptacles whose basic function is keeping or containing, is a feminine symbol which can refer to spherical objects which are symbols of Oneness and of the Spiritual principle. The myth of "Pandora's box" appears to allude to the significance of the unconscious, particularly in the special sense of its unexpected, excessive, destructive potentialities....¹⁰

The symbolic properties of a fan similarly illustrate the sophisticated informational assessment necessary to symbol identification.

⁹ P.D. Ouspensky, A New Model of The Universe: Principles Of The Psychological Method In Its Application To Problems Of Science, Religion and Art (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), p. 264.

¹⁰ Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 31.

Its symbolic significance depends on the shape and size. The large flabellate fan is related to air and wind, and is the emblem of Chang-li Chuan, the first of the Eight Immortals, who is said to have used it to revive the spirits of the dead. The fan of this type is usually heart-shaped and is sometimes decorated with feathers. The feathers stress the association with ariel and celestial symbolism as a whole. It is an attribute of rank among several Asian and African peoples, and is still so used—with a cosmic significance—by the Pope. The characteristic Western fan is the folding type and hence associated with the phases of the moon, so that its symbolism relates to imagination, change, and femininity. The changing pattern of phenomenon, as shown in the rhythm of the moon phases (non-being, appearance, increase, full-being, decrease) is expressed in terms of erotic allegorical fan-language. So in the Hereclitean conception of perpetual flux, a fan is used in this latter sense in one of his paintings.¹¹

These two descriptions exemplify the layering effect of sophisticated symbol-formation into myth-making where one's psyche calls upon multiple associations to crystallize the impact of an object as a symbol. The psyche, adept in abbreviation, derives from these associations a resultant composite: a summation of the significance of an object to the individual. Consequently, when the object is viewed, it stands to represent all of the accumulated information. The sophistication of this symbol-forming mechanism necessitates an expansive data base with a system of categorization disguised to the conscious mind.

To illustrate, there is the case of a painting recently completed. Two white objects, the milk pitcher described previously and a tall bottle were arranged formally side by side. Both proportioned to human scale, they fit in relationship to one another the accepted proportion in Western culture of man to woman in their stature. The bottle, draped at the foot by fabric, carries with it the association of bride. This "couple" of bottle and pitcher has an inverse relationship for, in the instance of the bottle (although it has properties that identify it as a feminine form, i.e. receptacle, curved at the top) it alludes to masculine forms in its long, straight body, particularly beside the voluptuously curvilinear pitcher. The custom, of course in Western culture, is for the bride to be the more ornately dressed on the occasion of matrimony. The irony then, of this image rests on the fact that the more masculine of the forms is adorned as bride. Considering the masculine properties of the bottle, a second allusion is suggested in this painting; namely, that occasion of ceremony in which a couple participates, where the male is the focus of adornment: the king's coronation. Many other cues highlight the masculine form. The light falls on the bottle rather than the pitcher which is partially in shadow and slightly behind the bottle. The surface quality of the bottle itself is nearly iridescent, the brilliance of the white surrounded by pure cadmium yellow directs attention to that object. Neither object is in the center; there is a large space between them where the "king's cloak" rests; in other words, his position as king stands between them. Each, however, anchors its respective side of the canvas setting up a balance of role and responsibility. The positioning not only suggests the formality of this event; it gives extensive information on the painter's concept of marriage, social responsibility and public service. While the draping of

¹¹Ibid., pp. 101-102.

the fabric resembles a formal wedding portrait, a bride's gown wrapped around her feet, it is equally evocative in its secondary allusion to coronation in the portrayal of a king being applauded by his court.

There are many personal allusions in this painting which I did not originally recognize as a portrait of my husband and I. It was within moments of finishing the painting that the inner necessity for selecting this particular arrangement became apparent. I would like to briefly relate this information since it further substantiates the specificity of the subconscious contents of this painting.

My husband was born an Aries with strong Leo influences which impose a regality in stature and physical features as well as an air of prominence. Similar to the tradition in kingship of wearing a crown when in ceremony, my husband wore a turban when in public. Flamboyance, charisma and courage are all traits attributed to the signs of Aries (the Ram) and Leo (the Lion and sign of kings). While there is definitely humor in the privilege of birthright à la kings and queens, birthright based on the laws of karma warrants attention. In that sense, I can easily parallel the reference to "a king among men" when recalling my husband. A person's birthright can be apparent to others although one may not know why a certain individual commands respect. In fact, we have potential as souls that outreaches the present moment, giving us a versatility that is chameleon. If then, we can move comfortably into a role, fully aware of its implications and our personalities can command recognition in that role, then, we can comfortably recognize its reality. In other words, I believe that thoughts are things; forms in themselves: that is, conception of an idea results in its manifestation in some form. This approaches a form of animism.¹²

¹²Animism is described as "...any of various beliefs whereby natural phenomena and things animate and inanimate are held to possess an innate soul." Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 52. One of Jung's critics illustrates the standard view of Jung's embrace of animistic thought in his criticism of Jung:

"Jung accordingly proceeded to propound his doctrine of "sacrificing the rational function" whose overvaluation by scientists he considered a mere prejudice of Western civilization, in order to give validity to the function of feeling, intuition, and, sensation, all of which, he maintains, are equally efficacious for the perception of the inner world of mind as well as the external world of nature and human culture. What Jung's sacrifice of reason, the main prop of science, has led to, seems to be a return to a form of animism, since to him the dream must be treated as a reality co-equal to that of the external world, but it is sufficient to point out that Jung's attempt to escape the ruthlessness of reason has not led to a freedom from ideological colouring; it has led rather to an eclectic and animistic ideology formed by an attempt to synthesize Oriental, Germanic, and other primitive elements, a point of view which is not merely alien to the scientific spirit but definitely depreciates its value." (Jackson Steward Lincoln, *The Dream in Primitive Cultures*, intro. by C.G. Seligman, F.R.S. (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Co., 1935; reprint ed., (New York: Johnson Reprint Co., 1970), p. 12.

It is not a far stretch based on the memory of my husband to represent him in the exalted image of king since I consciously viewed him as a leader and a source of brilliance. This was in sharp contrast to the visual memory I had of him at the time of his death: lapsed into coma after tremendous suffering. This clearly illustrates to what extent a need existed to transform images of death and dying into those of rebirth and regeneration.

While my subconscious mind orchestrated the subject and design of this painting, it disguised the contents just enough to avoid recognition until it was completed, thus insuring the integrity of its message while blocking conscious intervention. Rather than standing by him at the time of his death, the antithesis of that scene is presented: the exaltation of the occasion pictured serves to replace the original image. The reference to myself as queen is an easy jump insofar as it relates to a belief I hold that many if not all unions are pre-ordained. Without exception, through a process known as synastry, my husband and I, both astrologers, derived information from the comparison of our birth charts showing amazing correspondences in mutual aspect guidance. Again, the reference drawn here to the often pre-arranged royal wedding serving the state most often before the individuals is similar in nature to the divinely ordained union. According to A Dictionary of Symbols, marriage is:

In alchemy, a symbol of "conjunction" represented symbolically also by the union of sulphur and mercury—of the King and Queen. Jung has also shown that there is a parallel between the alchemical significance and of the intimate union or inner conciliations—with the process of individuation of the unconscious, feminine side of man with his spirit.¹³

Synastry, as mentioned earlier, is the art of comparing the birth data of two individuals. Robert Hand, a contemporary astrologer and author, outlines our Aries/Taurus relationship at its most basic point of comparison:

Taurus is the next phase in the cycle (of signs of the zodiac after Aries). Its function is to provide a vessel for the energies of Aries so that they can be made manifest. Aries, the solar energy of early spring, warms Taurus, the soil, so that living things may grow.

Taurus, like the Moon, symbolizes the container or matrix for the manifestation of energy. The container represented by Taurus provides the medium whereby the energy symbolized by Aries can become manifest on the physical plane.... Any medium in which energy is manifest affects the nature of the energy and thereby acquires a creative potential of its own. The energy for creation may be from another source, but the style and nature of the creativity arise from that which receives the energy.

Aries and Taurus form the first positive-negative pair of signs in the zodiac, and even though they contrast, when put together they represent a whole. Together, they are a living body, animated by the fire of Aries and given form by the earth of Taurus.¹⁴

¹³Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 204.

¹⁴Robert Hand, Horoscope Symbols (Rockport, Mass.: Para Research Inc., 1981) pp. 213-214.

I discovered this description months after I had adopted the milk pitcher as a personal symbol. This is in keeping with the notion of synchronicity: pieces of a puzzle were falling into my lap so that I would "discover" the profound nature of the selection of this particular form as a symbol of selfhood.

THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF OBJECTS IN STILL-LIFE PAINTING

Braque reveals his motive for selecting musical instruments as a subject matter when he writes:

When in 1909 fragmented objects appeared in my canvases this represented for me a means of getting closer to the object, within the limits tolerated by the painting. Fragmentation aided me to build up the space and movement within this space; the object could be introduced only after the space had been created. In that period I painted a large number of musical instruments, first because they lay around me, and then because their plastic feature and their volume were an integral part of still-life, such as I conceived it. I had already adopted the concept of tactile or manual space (I prefer the later term) and the musical instrument, in its capacity of object, possessed the additional virtue, that by touching it, it could be animated. That is why I was so attracted by musical instruments, rather than other objects or even the human figure....¹⁵

Discussion of Vessels—The Bell, The Boat, The Vase, The Shell, The Drum

When I inventory objects that can be characterized as vessels there is one underlying prerequisite based on the object's function: holding capacity. A vessel has been described as:

In the Egyptian system of hieroglyphs, a determinative sign corresponding to the idea of receptacles in general. It is a symbol whose immediate significance is that of the context in which the intermingling of forces takes place, giving rise to the material world. From this sense arises a secondary symbolism—that of the female matrix.¹⁶

I have selected five objects that are highly instructive by symbolic definition because they possess many if not all of the qualities characteristic of vessel/receptacle.

Consider the bell:

Its sound is a symbol of creative power. Since it is in a hanging position, it partakes of the mystic significance of all objects which are suspended between heaven and earth. It is related, its shape to the vault and consequently, to the heavens. This is an inverted receptacle whose musical function elevates it to a role as announcer.¹⁷

¹⁵Abbey Library London, Braque (London: Murrays Sales and Service Co., 1977), p. 12.

¹⁶Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 360.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 24.

Consider the boat:

In the most general sense, a "vehicle." Bachlard notes that there are a great many references in literature testifying that the boat is the cradle rediscovered (and mother's womb).¹⁸

Mary Cassatt's theme of motherhood throughout her body of work may be reflected in some of the objects she selected, of course the familiar water pitcher in bowl, and then the open-mouthed boat in The Boating Party, the vehicle carrying this curious group of figures. Could the artist have intentioned this allusion to boat as maternal vehicle?

Consider the vase:

In the Egyptian system of hieroglyphs, this is the determinative sign corresponding to Nu (or Nun or Nou), the god of repose, immanence and acceptance. The "full vase" is associated with the Plant of Life and is an emblem of fertility. The golden vase or pot filled with white lilies is the common emblem of the Virgin Mary.¹⁹

Consider the shell:

One of the eight emblems of good luck in Chinese Buddhism, found in allegories about royalty and also a sign for a prosperous journey. The favourable implication is the result of the shell's association with water, the source of fertility. According to Eliades, shells are also related to the moon and to Woman.

In discussing the shell, the pearl is also referred to:

Pearl symbolism also is very closely linked with the shell. The mystic birth of Aphrodite from a shell is the obvious relevance. In Schneider's view, the shell is the mystic symbol of the prosperity of one generation rising out of the death of the preceding generation. In all probability, its favorable meaning is—as in the case of the well and the bottle—a consequence of the thirsty traveller or pilgrim linking the shell in his mind with the presence of water; this would explain its significance in mediaeval allegories.²⁰

Consider the drum:

A symbol of primordial sound, and a vehicle for the word, for tradition and for magic. With the aid of drums, shamans can induce a state of ecstasy. It is not only the rhythm and the timbre, which are important in the symbolism of the primitive drum, but, since it is made of the wood of "The Tree of the World", the mystic sense of the latter also adheres to it. According to Schneider, the drum is, of all musical instruments, the most pregnant with mystic ideas. In Africa, it is associated with the heart. In the most primitive cultures, as in the most advanced, it is equated with the sacrificial altar and hence it acts as mediator between heaven and earth....²¹

¹⁸Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 358.

²⁰Ibid., p. 293.

²¹Ibid., p. 89.

Viewpoints on an Assortment of Objects Used by the Artist

The objects in my studio at this moment are: a milk pitcher, a bottle, a vase, a pair of trophy-like vases, an indigo blue bud vase, a group of gold objects, a brass lamp, a cotton t-shirt, a fabric with a black and white surface design and a floral fabric from a Sears sample book.

The pitcher²² which now represents the greatest beauty to me signifies the nurturing potential of the universe, the sanctuary of every empty space. Specifically, it houses a female space where nurturing is available to any energy wishing to occupy it. A female space that is nurturing symbolizes motherhood. Returning to an empty nurturing space that has a form of its own necessitates shedding one's own physical form: a return to an essential form. Now this pitcher can operate in a process of transmutation—to be inside the form we must surrender our own form and then by becoming the contents of the pitcher, assume its form. From the experience of placing ourselves within the pitcher we gain all the knowledge within that object.

The bottle is an object I took on as a hidden potential of qualities that seem foreign to me yet are qualities I acknowledge within myself. This bottle now represents my stature in the world, the dignity and pride of the spirit, the force of the will and personal courage. It represents the masculine initiative in my nature. It is counterpoint to the pitcher—I seem to tolerate it only in relation to the pitcher. It is my conscience reminding me of what must be done with one's potential. Yet, it is finally a tower of strength, undeniable in its proclamation of self, undeniably rigid in its towering height. I am almost embarrassed to claim it but it too portrays an aspect of my psyche, an inner personae that has earned

²²Herbert Read, Education Through Art (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), pp. 20-21. Why might one find a simple pitcher (jug) beautiful?

"Take the case of the humble jug. Jugs are of all shapes and sizes, but if we hold a census of jugs, I think we should find that one form has predominated ever since pottery was invented: the pear-shaped or unduloid jug. Though it pear-shaped I do not think this form is usually derived from the fruit. The form of the fruit itself is due to a basic law of physics. If you take a suitable liquid, a little denser than water and capable of mixing with it, and pour a little into a glass of water, it spreads over the surface and gradually turns into a hanging drop, nearly hemispherical; but as more liquid is added the drop sinks, or rather grows downwards, still clinging to the surface film; and the balance of forces between gravity and surface-tension stretches out the drop until it assumes the pear-shaped or unduloid form, and finally breaks in two. But at the moment of greatest tension, the drop assumes the pear shape; and this is a shape assumed, not only by the pear, but by many other objects in nature: the shells of tiny molluscs, various seed-pods and cellular organisms. What I am suggesting is that when a coffee-pot or milk-jug assumes this shape, and we find it beautiful, it is because the potter, in shaping the pot, has instinctively given it the tense form of the liquid drop."

the tools/skills of this world through determination.²³

The vase, for all its swirling grace, is not a frivolous figure. She is the embodiment of woman, free to express her own sexual nature: the dynamism and fluidity it affords her; the power that is self-propelling. Hers is the beauty of artistic expression.

The pair of trophy-like vases represent the undeniable duality in my nature and in all appearances. Implicit in an identical pair of objects is the artist's searching for something to mirror life. Together, the vases represent the study of appearance from which the artist attempts to locate the signs portending the mystery of life. To me, they are the pillars of life, the monuments that stand at our sides, that flank us and block the danger of that which is unknown. Theirs is the comfort of the concrete world—a world where things surround us—in contrast to the diffuse world of the mind where thoughts and images are the only markers. I am thankful to have them in my repertoire, yet, they make me a bit uncomfortable because they infer the mysteries that continue to elude us.

An indigo blue bud vase shaped like an idol is my strongest object. I use it only on special occasions: at times, when I am deeply troubled. To me, it is almost too provocative to be viewed: representing my unconscious mind and its forbidden knowledge.²⁴ I particularly love this vase for its ability to invoke a response

²³C.G. Jung, *The Spirit In Man, Art and Literature*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull (New York: Bollingen Foundation/Pantheon Books, 1966), p. 81 ref. 127:

"The primordial image, or archetype, is a figure be it a daemon, a human being, or a process—that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed. Essentially, therefore, it is a mythological figure. When we examine these images more closely, we find that they give form to countless typical experience of our ancestors. They are, so to speak, the psychic residue of innumerable experiences of the same type. They present a picture of the psychic life in the average, divided up and projected into the manifold figures of the mythological pantheon. But the mythological figures are themselves products of creative fantasy and still have to be translated into conceptual language. Only the beginnings of such a language exist, but once the necessary concepts are created they could give us an abstract scientific understanding of the unconscious processes that lie at the roots of the primordial images. In each of these images there is a little piece of human psychology and human fate, a remnant of the joys and sorrows that have been repeated countless times in our ancestral history, and on the average follow the same course. It is like a deeply graven river-bed in the psyche, in which the waters of life, instead of flowing along as before in a broad but shallow stream, suddenly swell into a mighty river."

²⁴C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 269:

"There is a sadness in an animal's eyes and we never know whether that sadness is bound up with the soul of the animal or is a poignant message which speaks to us out of that still unconscious existence. That sadness also reflects the mood of Africa, the experience of its solitudes. It is a maternal mystery, this primordial darkness."

in me that is totally irrational. It was the last time I took it out, that only afterwards I noticed each object in the painting represented a member in my family with each relationship portrayed with multiple allusions to those in my family. Like my unconscious mind; while I know it is there, I do not often wish to call on it.

The gold objects work as a group: a band-aid container—covered with gold foil paper, a small round ornamental lidded vase minus lid and motley assortment of metallic objects collected simply for their golden appearance. This group represents the divine inspiration to which I aspire and from which I seek guidance. It is the small increment of gold in our human tradition. It is also the God-self or Higher Self within us all. Finally it is the hope for divine intervention.

The brass lamp I use simply for its base—a thick brass band with three spokes rising up from the base. While I acknowledge the somewhat denser and more common radiance of brass, this ring reminds me of the metaphysical; objects of ambiguity suggest the existence of parallel worlds. This is a blatant reminder that some ambiguities in viewing are so apparently contradictory that we must assume there is another dimension to reality.

The shirt, a squared off t-shirt that is divided by four into blocks of color in black, blue-violet, red-orange and neutral, represents the four elements of nature and astrology²⁵ which make up the fabric of life—black as earth, blue-violet as water, red-orange as fire and neutral as air. I consider black to be equivalent to the will. As air, neutral represents flight and the spirit. Red-orange as fire refers to power and physicality. Blue-violet as water is the emotions. This is the fabric of my being.

So too is the black and white fabric divided down the center in a black-white figure/ground reversal: it is simply another aspect of my being. Its force lies not only in the yin/yang aspect of black and white forms in asymmetrical tension yet the source of its dynamism eludes me. This fabric's surface design provokes a deep response in me. Its primitive markings form a pattern that I recognize to be one of the landscapes the unconscious mind travels. It represents the vitality and force of my life at its most basic point, the constant force of change, the unconscious ocean that compels us beyond ourselves—the momentum of life and the self-proclamation it encourages. Just as the unconscious mind sets the tone of one's life and one's days, it represents the depths of the soul we fear yet must discover. While this fabric is more comfortable to view than the indigo vase, they are of the same intensity; originating from the same source.

The floral fabric is the backdrop upon which life's dramas unfold. It is not a personally revealing symbol but rather, it represents the impersonality upon which we must undress our cares in a world that barely notices.

These are the objects that speak to me today not only of truth about myself but of themselves. They resonate to a level of vibration towards which a quiet mind can elevate its spirit to experience an interchange with simple objects. This dialogue provokes consciousness in an individual attuned to the finer vibrations of life.

²⁵For a further discussion on the four element symbolism in esoteric astrology: Ralph Metzner, Maps of Consciousness: I Ching, Tantra, Tarot, Alchemy, Astrology, Actualism (New York: Collier Books, 1971), pp .87-88.

It may seem like an obvious question to ask, Why do we need symbols when we can create in every detail an exact replica of objects that we view?

To enclose all truth in spoken language, to express the highest occult mysteries in an abstract style, this would not only be useless, dangerous and sacrilegious, but also impossible. There are truths of a subtle, synthetic and divine order, to express which in all their inviolate completeness, human language is incapable. Only music can sometimes make the soul feel them, only ecstasy can show them in absolute vision, and only esoteric symbolism can reveal them to the spirit in a concrete way. (S. Guarita in his book, Au Seuil du Mystère)²⁶

According to Ouspensky, the abstraction of a symbol can release potentials of comprehension that a word can only describe.

Unlike despotic orthodoxies, a symbol can deliver man from the slavery of words and formulae and allow him to attain to the possibility of thinking freely. It is impossible to avoid the use of symbols if one desires to penetrate into the secrets (mysteries), that is to say, into those truths which can so easily be transformed into monstrous delusions as soon as people attempt to express them in direct language without the help of symbolic allegories. The silence which was imposed on the initiates finds its justification in this. Occult secrets require for their understanding an effort of the mind, they can illuminate the mind inwardly, but they cannot serve as a theme for rhetorical arguments. Occult knowledge cannot be transmitted either orally or in writing. It can only be acquired by deep meditation. It is necessary to penetrate deep into oneself in order to discover it. And those who seek it outside themselves are on the wrong path. It is in this sense that the words of Socrates "Know Thyself" must be understood.

In the realm of symbolism one must not attempt to be too exact. Symbols correspond to ideas which by their very nature are difficult to embrace, and which are quite impossible to reduce to scholastic definitions.²⁷

The Relationship of Creative Visualization as a Meditative Technique to Image-Making

I would like to focus for a moment on the image-making capacity of the psyche in the altered state of meditation. From personal experience with meditation over a number of years and employing a variety of technique, I have found that the psyche generates imagery of its own volition. While it is true that images can be induced in a fully conscious state as well as semi-conscious state, a process referred to as creative visualization whereby we choose to promote image-making activity within ourselves through stimulation of that potential with

²⁶P.D. Ouspensky, A New Model of The Universe, p. 197 quoting Stanislas de Guarita, Au Seuil du Mystère (Paris: Georges Carré, 1890), pp. 176-177.

²⁷Ibid., p. 196.

focused thought there is a separate instance which becomes apparent in deep meditation as well as directed states of emotion²⁸ that evidences the psyche's ability to generate imagery and thus function independently. This function can provide the individual with information from the deepest source of his/her being.

For an artist, the ongoing dialogue with symbols reaches his/her art-making activity." All artists are magicians for they juggle the forms of life into transcendental patterns."²⁹ As the conscious mind always seeks concrete expression, its talent is called upon to make manifest these shadows. They are literally drawn from the psyche; freed and established as form. However, they must mirror the vocabulary of forms presently in existence. Originally, every form develops out of its symbolic conception; is given substance by the hands yet it originates in the mind. There is reciprocity in this process. For while objects are equivalents for symbols generated from within, they also act as catalyst for yet undiscovered symbolic association. While they originally assumed the shape of our conception, they are freed by their manifestation: a point from which their own consciousness begins. The working out of symbols within and surrounding us becomes a dynamic exchange with every form that is in existence.

Jung describes the process of accepting form through imagery presented to him in a dream:

My self retires into meditation and meditates my earthly form. To put it another way: it assumes human shape in order to enter 3-dimensional existence, as if someone were putting on a diver's suit in order to dive into the sea.... In earthly form it can pass through the experiences of the 3-dimensional world, and by greater awareness take a further step towards realization.³⁰

One of a number of current theories in the new science, (a marriage of mysticism, metaphysics and physics) in reference to the assumptions we must make in order to accept the laws of the universe is promoted in Ken Wilber's current anthology The Holographic Paradigm And Other Paradoxes: Exploring the Leading Edge of Science. In it he discusses our reception of the image of the universe

²⁸King, Kahuna Healing, p. 63:

"By far the most common practice, however, is the conscious building up of emotion. To kahunas, emotion is more than just feeling; it is movement of mana in the body accompanied by a specific thought. Strong emotion is equated with the presence of a great concentration of mana. The proficient kahuna is expected to be a master of emotions, able to generate them and dissipate them at will."

²⁹Nichols, Jung and Tarot, p. 57.

³⁰Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, pp. 323-324.

through a mathematical message similar to the structure of a hologram.³¹

When one begins to manipulate the percepts upon which our common reality is assured, the image-making capacity becomes a subject for investigation as it may give clues to the deeper structure of the mind by, as in the specific instance of meditation, literally looking inward to the mind. First, by inducing images through creative visualization, we can become familiar with the powerful impetus for image-making generated from within while analyzing this imagery and the process of its generation to uncover not only the structure of the personal psyche (psychology) but to conclude qualitative information on the structures of both the psyche and the mind.

Symbols of Transformation

Consider for a moment the concept of "mask" to tribal man:

Few African languages have a word which accurately translates as mask: BaKwele say buobkuk, "face of the forest spirit." Ibo say isi mmuo, "spirit head." Lega say lukuwakongo, "death gathers in." Jukun say bakindo to indicate a broad supernatural category including the high god, ancestors, bush and other spirits both visible and tangible as well as invisible and intangible. For the tribal African, the word or name embodies the living personage. Kalabari say, "The spirits stay and come in their names." (Horton 1965:10). In English, however, we interpose an extra

³¹Ken Wilber, ed., The Holographic Paradigm And Other Paradoxes: Exploring the Leading Edge of Science (Boulder and London: Shambala, 1982), pp. 7-8.

"Pribram, a renowned brain researcher, has accumulated evidence for a decade, that the brain's "deep structure" is essentially holographic-analogous to the lensless photographic process for which Dennis Gabor received a Nobel Prize.

Pribram's theory has gained increasing support and has not been seriously challenged. An impressive body of research in many laboratories has demonstrated that the brain structures see, hear, taste, smell and touch by sophisticated mathematical analysis of temporal and/or spatial frequencies. An eerie property of both hologram and brain is the distinction of information throughout the system, each fragment encoded to produce information of the whole.

Although the holographic model generated fruitful answers, it raised a question that came to haunt Pribram. Who was looking at the hologram? Who was the "little man inside the little man" what Arthur Koestler called "the ghost in the machine"? After agonizing over the problem for some time, Pribram said, he decided that if the question has stymied everybody since Aristotle, perhaps, it was the wrong question. "So I asked, 'What if the real world isn't made up of objects at all. What if it's a hologram?' " (Ken Wilber)

word "mask", for something that to the Africans is active and powerful and very real. Thus our neutral, inanimate "mask" is for the African a metahuman presence, an antelope spirit or a dead "father" returned, even if temporarily, to the village. These spirits, whether ancestors or other supernaturals, are immediately forceful, commanding awe, fear, obedience, distrust, laughter, reverence and revulsion. Men act in creating them and bringing them to the human community; people in turn must react to their dramatic performances, to the forces emanating from them.

Such spirit presences are actually new personalities who intervene, often powerfully and magically, in the affairs of men. Thus a transforming "costume" is much more than a mere covering-up or disguise. The masker, like his followers and his audience, forgets his human personality. A psychic state of spiritual involvement--possession--often lifts from the masker his own individuality; the spirit "rides his head," and his character and behavior fuse with those of the spirit he creates, the spirit he becomes.³²

What compels us to search out the secrets of life? Why does the concept of transformation recur as a theme in all art forms:

The life which we know in itself contains no aim. This is the reason why there is so much that is strange, incomprehensible, and inexplicable in it. And indeed, it cannot be explained by itself. Neither its suffering nor its joys, neither its beginning nor its end, nor its achievements, have any meaning. All of these are either a preparation for some other, future life or merely nothing. By itself, life here, on our plane, has no value, no meaning and no point. It is too short, too unreal, too ephemeral, too illusory, for anything to be demanded of it, for anything to be built upon it, for anything to be created out of it. It's whole meaning lies in another, a new, a future, life, which follows upon birth.³³

When a symbol, suppressed from our consciousness is made manifest through the creative act, we are changed through our comprehension of it. Once a secret is revealed, we see differently. Hidden knowledge about our psychic selves, once brought through the process of manifestation and evaluation can transform the concepts and beliefs once beheld.

The moment of transformation is the focus of inquiry to Ouspensky:

What happens at the moment when, according to the old allegory, the serpent bites his own tail, and when the death agony of one life comes into contact with the sensations of love which begin another life? We witness a process of transformation.³⁴

³²The Art Galleries: University of California, Santa Barbara, African Arts of Transformation (California: Regents of California, 1970), p. 24.

³³Ouspensky, A New Model of The Universe, p. 452.

³⁴Ibid., p. 451.

Perhaps the moment we wish to isolate is the enigmatic interval between death and its resultant birth. For example, my own experience revealed a self that was borne out of the death of someone I loved.

So often we are traumatized by change. The result is often a compulsion to understand the necessity for change. Nature exerts violent transformation: often change occurs with a velocity that stuns. Psychic trauma, like any shock, must be addressed so that a process of healing can begin. Change can ultimately be revealed as a constructive impulse, yet it is often introduced under violent or seemingly destructive circumstance, i.e. something being taken away.

The power of change to reveal hidden potentials and therefore knowledge can be the impetus for a form of change that is self-initiated. Traditional symbols of change/transformation such as fire, remind us of the constant need to affect change within ourselves without the stimulus of violent transformation. When an individual identifies the process of change or transmutation with acquiring power or acumen, a higher order of self-directed change can occur.

At this point, an individual whose awareness has evolved as a result of violent change, and, once having identified symbols that speak to him/her of personal change (in my case, the milk pitcher as a receptacle for grief transformed into a vessel for the energy of all living matter), can gain a sense of power simply by viewing an object that has been so identified by the psyche to represent a transformation in the context of one's life.

The psyche searches for that which it lacks or otherwise shows weakness in. According to diverse spiritual traditions, the spirit constantly seeks a higher ground towards a state of spiritual perfection and total awareness.

As the focus and concentration of our psychic selves (unconscious, subconscious and conscious) is directed, the subsequent development of psychic function and "paranormal" abilities becomes apparent. As the subconscious/unconscious aspect of psyche comes to recognize that it can regenerate and restore itself after trauma, it begins a more active dialogue with the conscious mind (now that a trust has been cemented) and I believe begins to seek true spiritual development.

The initiation rituals of tribal societies reflect this basic premise:

In recognition of the intimate connection between death and spiritual transformation, primitive religious ceremonies often required the initiate to face death. Sometimes, like the Hanged Man, he was abandoned, helpless and alone—perhaps in a dark forest. Or, like Sir Lancelot, he was forced to spend the night in his own tomb. Traditional in the initiation of a king was the final confrontation with the mysterious Black Knight, an unknown warrior armed with a primitive axe, who demanded that the initiate lay his neck on the block. If the young man had the courage to obey his faithful command, the mysterious stranger threw down his axe and lifted his visor, revealing himself as a savior of shining countenance.³⁵

³⁵Nichols, Jung and Tarot, p. 233.

Theosophical writings and Eastern based religions all describe a period when the soul must seek awareness through pain. Once the psyche becomes aware of its capacity, it can begin the more difficult work of spiritual advancement.





As a by-product of awareness learned through pain and as a consequence of the effort, psychic abilities are heightened. The "sixth sense", literally another means of sensing that encompasses the sensory functions of all of the five senses while raising them to a higher level of receptivity, becomes yet another apparatus for amassing information into symbol-formation. This method of sensing may belie another level of symbol-identification, one that is purely abstract. The psyche may draw from a collective unconscious³⁶ or a symbol language dating back to its origin. The most abstract geometric form, a triangle, for instance, can signify the experience of transformation and growth in a more economical and therefore more powerful way to the psyche, perhaps more so than any figurative symbol with human reference. The tensions of energy in the pivotal points of a triangle, the contained vortexes establish it as a universally acknowledged symbol of power dating back to prehistory. The swastika,³⁷ an ancient symbol of power in nature, was reversed by Hitler to become the symbol of his fascist regime.

³⁶Noel Tyl, Astrology and Personality: The Principles and Practice of Astrology, 12 vols. (St. Paul, Minn.: Llewellyn Publications, 1974), vol. 5: Astrological and Psychological Theories, p. 24. According to Noel Tyl:

"The collective unconscious conceived by Jung is the reservoir of memories inherited from man's ancestral past. We inherit the possibility of reviving experiences from this memory storehouse. Instinctive fears of the dark, acknowledgement of a god figure, and reaction to the mother are examples of the collective unconscious, the foundation for ego expression and personality development in life. Experiences bring concrete perception in the present together with images imbedded in the past.

Archetypes are the structural components of the collective unconscious. Archetypes are the image powers behind behavior patterns. In his work with dreams, Jung found universal symbolic forms within man's unconscious that appeared to have direct relationship to common archetypes. He studied mythology—and astrology—to get closer to the origin of archetypal symbols."

³⁷H.P. Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy, 2 vols. (London: Theosophical Publishing Co.; reprint ed. Pasadena, Ca.: Theosophical Univ. Press, 1977), 2:29-30.

"The "double sign" is, as every student of Occultism knows, the symbol of the male and female principles in Nature, of the positive and negative, for the Swastika or  is all that and much more.... The Egyptians symbolized Ank, "life" by the ansated cross or , which was only another form of Venus (Isis)  and meant esoterically, that all mankind and all animal life stepped out of the divine spiritual circle and fell into physical male and female generation.... The cross  is largely referred to as the mystical symbol of spirit intersecting matter—also of spirit triumphant over matter."

One phenomenon of psychic function is a natural desire to externalize an inner truth. Secondly, vision has a transforming mechanism—in essence, it processes information to extract its meaning in relation to a specific idea or situation.

To illustrate the latter suggestion, I will present a case of "discovering abstraction" in a still-life arrangement after many hours of observation while painting. Apart from the observation that objects themselves in a still-life setting do not change perceptibly over a number of hours, it can be noticed that permutations of time, space and light affect change around them. There does seem to be a separate mechanism, a resultant perceptual response, that translates the same scene differently after careful and continuous observation. At first notice, the fabric under the objects appears as concrete as the other forms. Then the "discovery" of the reference to landscape in the surface design of the cloth demands attention. The "discovery", a direct result of observation, is in the knowledge that the scene before one's eyes is literally transformed as one's perception isolates a particular quality that refers to another perceptual experience (pattern on cloth as landscape).

The artist, once familiar with the revelations of continual observation, can consciously begin to isolate qualities for viewing: shape relationships to assess composition, or shapes vanishing to the horizon to see "spatial relationships" which using the previous example might have stimulated the association of surface design to landscape.

Many trained artists obviously employ isolating techniques analytically. Although I, as an artist, am now aware of this conscious function; there are grounds to propose that beyond this there is an independent "transformer" in vision that sees as if in revelation.

Of course, the most appropriate place to turn for an analysis of psychic transformation is to the dream-state. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss dream consciousness or the phenomenon of sleep, it is relevant to present a brief discussion by Ouspensky on the power the psyche exhibits to transform images, events and situations during sleep.

I remember that this dream interested me very much because it showed me quite clearly that there was in me an artist, sometimes very subtle, who worked at these dreams and created them out of the material which I possessed but could never use in full measure while awake. And I saw that this artist was extraordinarily versatile in his knowledge, capacities and talents. He was a playwright, a producer, a scene-painter and a remarkable actor-impersonator.³⁸

In her discussion on the symbolism of the sword as it is represented on the card of Justice in the Marsailles Tarot, Sallie Nichols describes perception that is guided by "the voice" within which seeks to transform previous concepts of the spiritual self to expose new vistas while discriminating between the merits and

³⁸Ouspensky, A New Model of The Universe, p. 254.

pitfalls of the past.

The sword also symbolizes the sacrifice of illusions and pretensions of many kinds. Here the young ego steps out of the Garden of Eden forever. He can no longer live the provisional life of impossible dreams. He must use the sword to separate fantasy from reality and the scales (of Justice) to weigh the myriad possibilities of perfection which his imagination envisions against the imperfect realities of space, time and human energy.

The sword represents the golden power of discrimination which enables us to pierce through layers of confusion and false images to reveal a central truth. In this connection, one is reminded of King Solomon when he was confronted with two women, each claiming to be the mother of the same infant. He suggested cutting the child in half, whereupon the true mother was instantly revealed by her emotional reaction. Without using his sword, Solomon's keen insight cut through to the heart of the matter.³⁹

THE ARTS AND PSYCHIC FUNCTION

The need to exhibit psychic function through acts of creation has ennobled the arts throughout time. Carl Jung, in his autobiography chronicled the psychic events in his lifetime with a primitive house he erected which he later called "The Tower."

Gradually, through my scientific work, I was able to put my fantasies and the contents of the unconscious on a solid footing. Words and paper, however, did not seem real enough to me; more was needed. I had to achieve a kind of representation in stone of my innermost thoughts and of the knowledge I had acquired. Or, to put it another way, I had to make a confession of faith in stone. That was the beginning of the "Tower" the house which I built for myself at Bollingen.

From the beginning I felt the "Tower" as in some way a place of maturation—a maternal womb or a maternal figure in which I could become what I was, what I am and will be. It gave me a feeling as if I were being reborn in stone. It is thus a concretization of the individuation process, a memorial aere perennius. During the building work, of course, I never considered these matters. I built the house in sections, always following the concrete needs of the moment. It might also be said that I built it in a kind of dream. Only afterward did I see how all the parts fitted together and that a meaningful form had resulted: a symbol of psychic wholeness.⁴⁰

Cultural Parallels

The dimension the psyche seeks through the arts, as in Jung's "Tower" is readily

³⁹Nichols, Jung and Tarot, p. 155.

⁴⁰Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 225.

apparent in the arts of tribal Africa. The lives of tribal peoples in Africa are measured by changes in the personality assumed to take place at "crisis times" in human development (i.e. puberty). This transformation process of personality is marked by artistic energy through body decoration, masking, ritual and dance.

Puberty rites commonly include the acquisition of scars by both sexes, and marriage, as in any culture, requires elaborate dressing up.⁴¹

In fact, most initiations in tribal societies are marked by personal image-making events and ritualistic personal adornment.

If a person has sociopolitical aspirations or a penchant for spiritual leadership (often the two go hand in hand) and the mobility to achieve his ambitions, the occasions for artistic adornment multiply. Every social step, every title, every rank of diviner, every grade of priest and each sort of chiefship is likely to have its own distinctive insignia. Masks are donned by men (almost never by women) in many African cultures for a host of reasons. Festivals and funerals call for dressing up by most of the community with pigments, jewelry and fancy hairdressing; such embellishments help make these occasions memorable. And many of these artistic guises when assumed by the participants, transform the personality, the behavior and the very way of life of their bearers. Thus each important change of make-up or dress signals a concomitant spiritual or social change.⁴²

Particularly apparent in body painting/adornment and the image-making ritual is the impetus to manifest the imagination or more aptly the archetypes of Jung or by Kahuna and tribal standards the spirits of life and death. We encourage this dimension of experience with our art by giving form to ideas, beliefs and psychic identities. The Western notion of thought still is to distinguish between a conception and its result; animistic thought cannot.

If we were to discover the original service of art, I suspect it would lie in its capacity to illustrate to the psyche that which it can conceive of but must witness to fully comprehend.

Perhaps full comprehension of the symbolic transformation of a thought into form hinges upon learning when to recognize this moment when a form or an image that we bring to life begins to animate itself. During this transition images may still carry the illusion of self but are no longer simply a projection of self. When the mask in a ritual suddenly represents a new potential, that is the birth of form and its liberation from the original idea that necessitated its emergence into three dimensions. Each time this process occurs in the physical world, it is a reenactment of the transformation of the spirit; a powerful metaphor which recalls again and again the striving of the spirit for freedom from its earthly form. Do we need this drama of image-making along with the transformation it represents by means of symbols and their contents to remind and encourage the spirit to reach its true level of maturation? The drama of change, rendered by the smallest measure

⁴¹The Art Galleries, U.of C. at Santa Barbara, African Arts, p. 9.

⁴²Ibid., p. 10.

of matter goes on around us continually.⁴³ In fact this ritual dance of transformation, the percussion behind life which the spirit emulates is stimulation for the spirit in its quest towards developing and then testing skills which it must acquire in the material world. The spirit tests these skills, perhaps against the already familiar inherited psychic gifts—those originating from prebirth: the psychic arts. These would include such functions as clairvoyance, clairsaudience, telepathy, astral projection and psychic healing to name a few.

It is significant to discuss tribal image-making since, this seemingly literal interpretation of action and movement, may be the same kind of perceiving the unconscious mind operates by in its interpretation of the world. Insofar as it takes every occurrence as it appears, the level of awareness of the unconscious mind is such that the constructs of time and spatial relations go unheeded and in fact do not apply. This primal level of the psyche is most often neglected until it can no longer be silenced. Such is the case in the instance of mental illness, when the consonance of the three integers of the psyche diverge. This factor alone, I believe, is one of the dominant signals pointing to the necessity for art-making activity in our culture: to preserve the psychological balance of the individual by expressing the issues and themes the psyche seeks to resolve. Our symbols and rituals must begin to address the needs of the psyche for resolution of its contents. For this, we can take counsel from tribal tradition. The body painting in preparation for ritual in tribal society serves the need of the psyche to exhibit itself:

Body painting may be associated with specific cults as among the Yoruba, whose Orishana priests paint small white circles for important rites. Such painting symbolizes man's transcendence of the temporal world, and is analogous to the red and white "eye masks" painted by Ndemba twins to represent twin spirits, the red representing "blood" and the white representing "strength or good luck." These efforts to relate to another plane of reality are also similar to rituals performed by the Sonjo, who—believing they reincarnate as zebra—paint their legs with white clay in patterns imitating zebra stripes....Many examples of body painting signify the temporary creation of spiritual presences or efforts to communicate with beings outside the real world....Using his own flesh as a canvas, man can transform himself into a decorative and ritually effective artform.⁴⁴

Personal Account

While painting is an eloquent expression of the spirit, the psyche and the body, it represents to me at this time a method of spiritual/psychic training. It is

⁴³Eden Gray, Recognition: Themes on Inner Perception (Bethlehem, Pa.: Inspiration House, 1969), p. 7.

"Through science we have learned that there is intelligence even in the atom, a type of selection that causes them to group into elements. This selection runs through all things both animate and inanimate."

⁴⁴The Art Galleries, African Arts, pp. 15-16.

an activity that externalizes and parallels the struggle of the psyche/spirit to reign triumphant over matter through observation, evaluation and action.

When one believes, as I do, that spirit is to be triumphant over matter, one accepts the assumption that matter can conform to the needs of the spirit.⁴⁵ This knowledge frees the soul to investigate the potentials in this world for psychic expression.

Although seeking has not resulted in the "appropriate vessel" for my husband's ashes, it did surface a far greater need to communicate my loss to the spirit of things from whom I have found consolation. I discovered a greater beauty and power than I had known both within and surrounding me. I found that there is a syncopation to the darkness of grief; for each day we carry on within us a percussive dialectic with hope—one that is, at times, barely audible to the conscious mind.

My ritual of coming into the light was confirmation of my belief in the power of the psyche to deliver us to our greatest potential—the triumph of spirit over matter(+).

...those whom fate has never called to the threshold of death have found that facing the fact of death through the loss of someone close has liberated the spirit and opened the door to new vistas.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Wilber, Holographic Paradigm, p. 127.

"Dr. Pribram explains paranormal actions in this way: things are really not solid, so when we think in a certain manner (as some Hindus and others do) we have the power to change what we think is real. People like Uri Geller have a reality that is different from ours because in his reality the things we think are impossible are possible.

Then you may ask, "If this is true, why do we all see the same thing?" One answer is that our brains register a relative reality because they have been set by our culture, and so the mathematical computation will be similar. If a person is intoxicated, that will distort his computation so that he sees a different reality.

A good example of this is you. Why can't you perform actions that we consider paranormal or supernormal? I think it is because you do not think you can. You may say you wish to, or may sincerely want to, but that will not change what you subconsciously think. Our culture says that those actions would not be possible, so that is what you think is real. To change your reality you would have to alter your innermost thoughts." (Ken Wilber)

⁴⁶Nichols, Jung and Tarot, p. 233.

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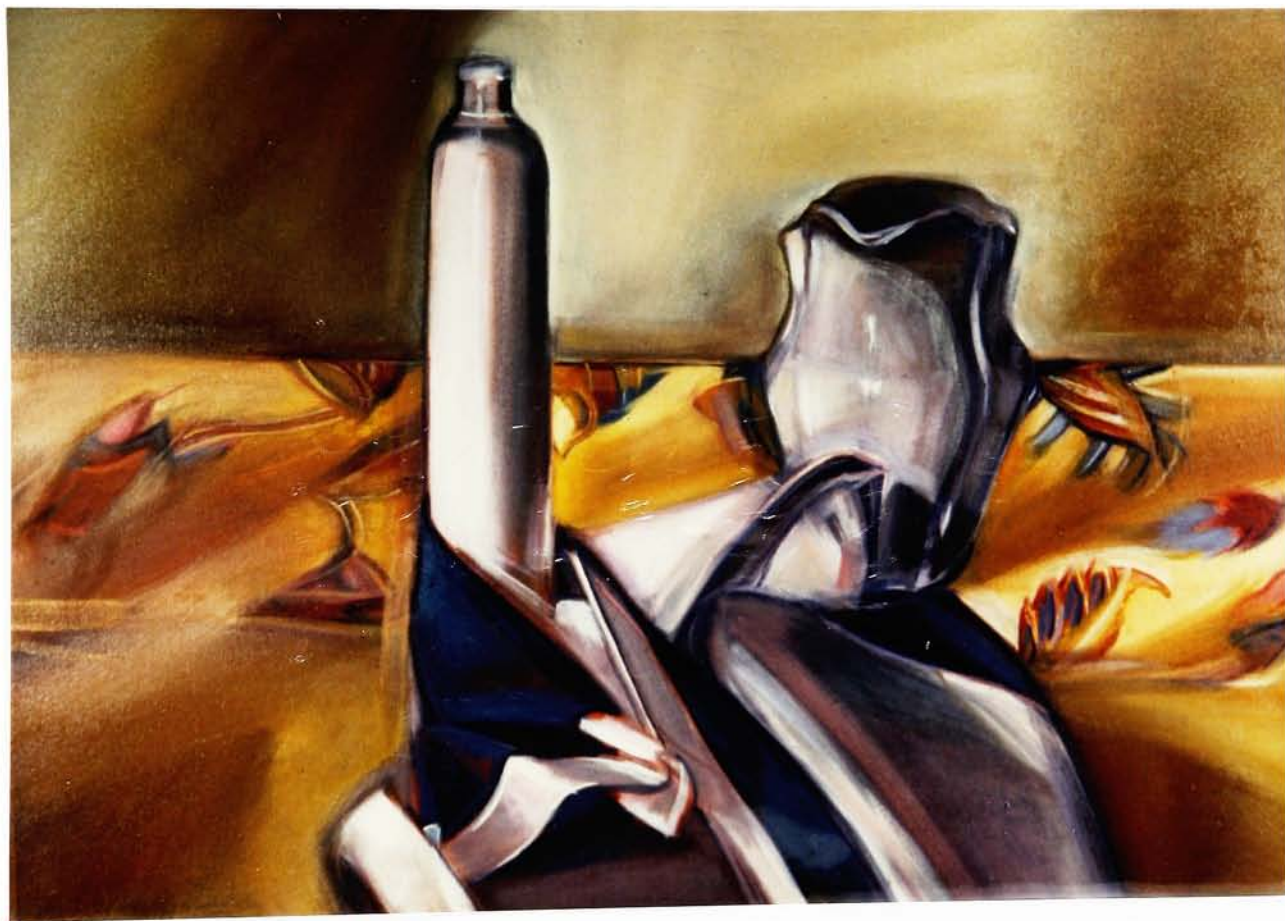


Fig. 2 Royal Wedding Portrait



Fig. 3 Matrimony



Fig. 4 At The Altar



Fig. 5 Mundane Wedding Portrait



Fig. 6 Coronation